

National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week

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Graduation ceremonies, rising temperatures, and the smell of fresh cut grass are all signals indicating summer is just around the corner. For many Springfield-Greene County residents the arrival of summer means it is time to visit the local swimming pool, lake, waterpark, or other recreational waters. The week preceding Memorial Day (May 21-27, 2007) is the third annual National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week.

Recreational water illnesses (RWIs) are the various illnesses caused by germs that can contaminate virtually all recreational waters, including pools, water parks, spray decks, rivers, lakes, and even oceans. Swimming in a well-maintained swimming pool will reduce your likelihood of developing a RWI. However, some germs like the parasite *Cryptosporidium*, ("Crypto") are resistant to chlorine and can live in properly chlorinated pools for days. Crypto, like many other RWI causing germs, are introduced into the pool by swimmers who are ill with diarrhea and spread to other swimmers when they swallow the contaminated water.

The goal of this year's recognition is to highlight the importance of healthy swimming behaviors for preventing RWIs. Outbreaks of RWIs continue to occur in the United States each year. These outbreaks highlight the continuing need for education about recreational water illness prevention to ensure a healthy swimming experience.

The public's awareness of RWIs and implementing the healthy swimming behaviors plays an important role in stopping the spread of recreational water illnesses. Germs on and in swimmers' bodies end up in the water and can make other people sick. Even healthy swimmers can get sick from RWIs, but the young, elderly, pregnant women and immunosuppressed persons are especially at risk.

Healthy swimming behaviors include the following:

- Do not swim when you have diarrhea.
- Do not swallow pool water or get pool water in your mouth.
- Shower or bathe before swimming (children too!).
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children on bathroom breaks or change diapers often.
- Change children's diapers in a bathroom, not at poolside.

Recreational water venues provide an excellent opportunity to increase physical activity, cool off, and enjoy leisure time with family and friends. To make this summer a healthy swimming experience, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department would like to encourage everyone to adopt healthy swimming behaviors to reduce the risk of recreational water illnesses. In addition, we wish everyone a healthy, safe, and fun summer. For more information about Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week and healthy swimming, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658 or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming>.